

INTEGRATED DESIGN SYSTEMS - CAPTURING , REUSING AND OPTIMIZING DESIGN METHODS IN NEW MILLENNIUM

Julia Dunphy **Ph.D**, John C. Peterson and Jose J. **Salcedo**

Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology MS 525/3660
4800 Oak Grove Drive, Pasadena, CA 911 09, USA
(818)306-61 53 julia.r.dunphy@jpl.nasa.gov
(81 8)306-6147 john.c.peterson@jpl.nasa.gov
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ABSTRACT

An important goal of New Millennium is to research new methods of performing spacecraft and mission design. We have completed the first phase of our effort on how to make design tools such as analysis programs more available. We are now embarking with Stanford University on discovering methods to allow more project history and knowledge to be automatically captured and reused and with Ames Research Center on how to use virtual reality to enhance the visualization of new missions before any hardware exists. We are also trying to capture the design process in an electronic form so that computer aided optimization may lead to a vastly greater search of the possible designs which meet the design requirements.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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method which captures much of the experts' expertise in a dataflow design graph. This is not a "knowledge" based approach in the usual sense but is rather a prescriptive representation of the methodology that an expert would use in designing, some aspect of the spacecraft. This design graph, called a methogram, is usable by a generalist who is then able to design a spacecraft with a very small team.

The first generation of microspacecraft is already in design but we will be introducing our new design tools in time for the second generation. There are several features that we wish to be able to offer such designers besides the availability of captured design knowledge.

- Seamlessly connectable analysis tool set
- Simulated immersive mission validation
- Immediate access to written material germane to past decisions

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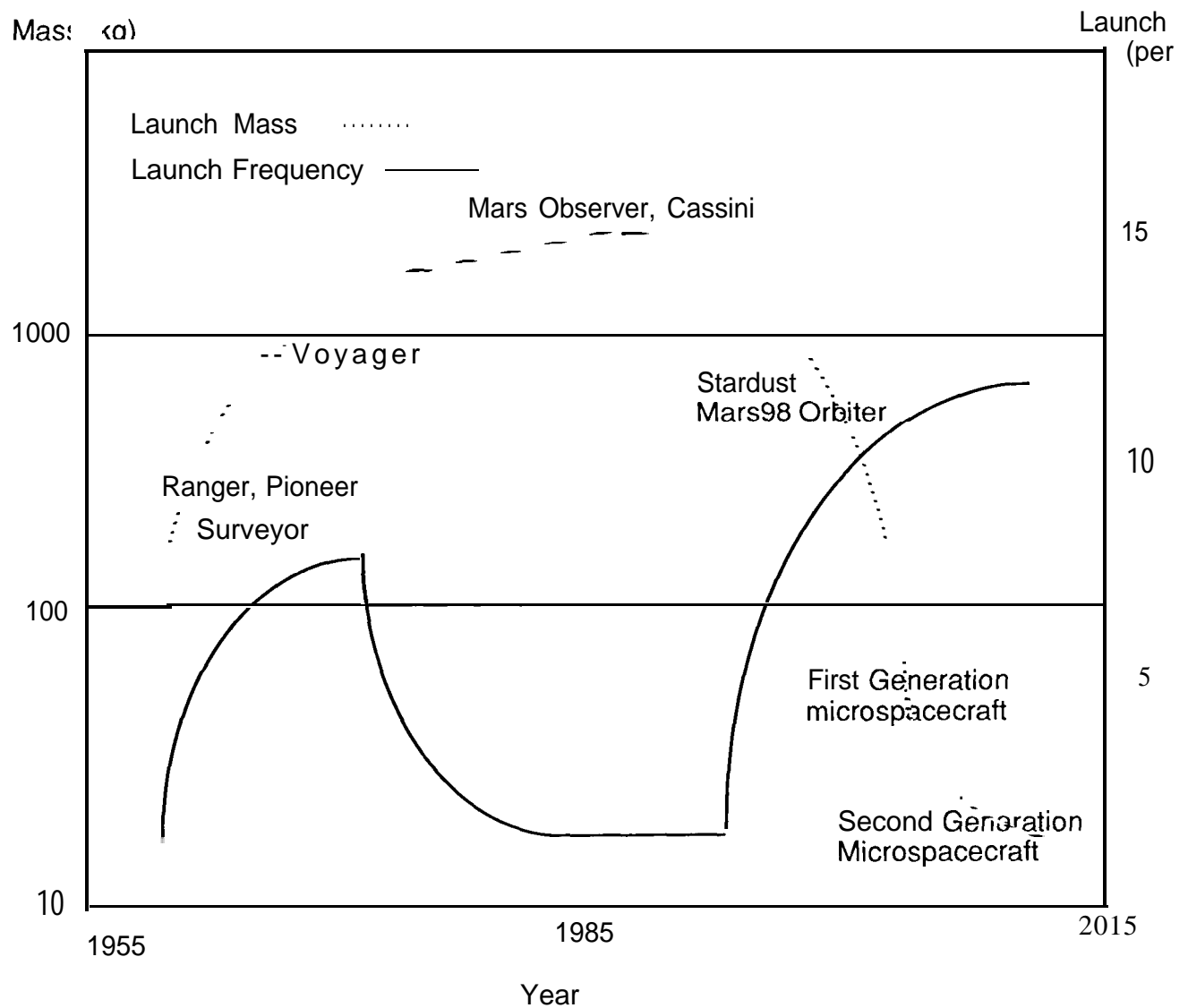


Fig. 1: Proposed JPL Launch Schedule

2.0 BACKGROUND

An important function of the NASA New Millennium program is to put together a set of design tools which are integrated, span life cycle, enhance productivity, capture knowledge, and allow virtual prototyping and systematic treatment of performance, cost and risk. This umbrella effort is called "*Integrated Design Systems*" and covers several individual products to aid designers in producing better spacecraft at lower cost while taking less time.

In 1993, we began a collaboration with Lockheed Martin Corp. to produce a design environment where it was easy to integrate new design tools (for example, analysis programs) and to describe the data flow through collections of these tools so as to produce results to aid in the decision making. This environment, called the Multidisciplinary Integrated Design Assistant For Systems (MIDAS) has been in use now for several years at JPL with notable success.

Building on this base we are now working on two separate areas of Integrated Design Systems. One is a collaboration with Stanford University to allow the automatic capture of design history as it occurs and allow for the recovery of the history when requested by later designers. The other is to add an immersive design system (Interpretive Product Design Environment, IPDE) which will allow designers to examine and test their designs before any hardware exists. A key part of the IPDE is to connect it directly to the MIDAS system so that the full tool set is available from within the IPDE. Recently we have teamed with Ames Research Center to take advantage of their knowledge of immersive design.

3.0 TOOL BASE

Integrated Design Systems requires the best design tools for spacecraft and missions. Whenever possible we use state-of-the-art tools but sometimes can only find best-practice tools. Certain of these technologies are available commercially, and the spacecraft industry is using them to some degree. Other tools are "home-grown" and still others are in development, such as probabilistic analysis methods.

The early New Millennium missions are benchmarking existing tools, customizing them for the new process as it emerges and clearly defining to the commercial suppliers what must be added and enhanced for the complete seamless development of next millennium spacecraft.

4.0 MIDAS

MIDAS is a design infrastructure developed at JPL to integrate these tools and present the user with a "plug and play" interface which allows many of the goals of *Integrated Design Systems* to be met. MIDAS provides a database of components, analysis tools, visualization tools, drawings, and documents. A designer is able to access these items and seamlessly use them to come up with an optimized design methodology. The methodology is generated graphically ("methogram") and describes the process that the designer is accustomed to following when making decisions about the form and attributes of each component. The methogram can be saved in the database and reused either in another part of the design or in a later design. There are many processes in spacecraft design which are quite straightforward and

repeated each time a new design comes along.

Such processes are candidates to be transferred into methograms. For example, a certain shape may be chosen with beginning dimensions, a thermal analysis run, a new dimension based on the results of the analysis chosen, and the process repeated until satisfactory analysis results found. All of these steps make up a methogram which can be executed on a supercomputer or a network of workstations automatically.

After designing the methogram, the operator needs to debug it using MIDAS facilities until the operator feels that the methogram is as general and detailed as possible.

A designer, who may or may not be the originator of the methogram, can then provide the input, in the form of design requirements, and execute the methodology to arrive at the point design. If the requirements change (as they nearly always do) the designer can repeat the process in a matter of minutes instead of having to manually go through all the design steps necessary.

5.0 CAPTURING DESIGN HISTORY

The Stanford University Center For Design Research (CDR) has been working for several years on the general subject area of capturing design decision making in electronic form. One of the biggest problem areas is in terms of interpretation. Design decisions are not always based on technical concerns. Sometimes a component is chosen because it is available from a supplier or enables spacecraft assembly to be facilitated. Decisions must then be interpreted by people from different organizations - procurement, manufacturing and

finance for example. The CDR product, the "Interdisciplinary Communication Medium (ICM)" facilitates this process. It allows each user to customize the captured knowledge so that it is couched in terms that they understand. Stanford is presently working to add new features to ICM to automatically import knowledge from design meetings and written communications without the designers having to manually type it in.

6.0 INTERPRETIVE PRODUCT DESIGN ENVIRONMENT

MIDAS was successful in linking the components and the analysis tools to be able to tell how good the present design was, but the IPDE will add the capabilities to make the design as good as it can be. We are using a commercial immersive design system from MuSE Technology to visualize the spacecraft and the target body. The Muse system is connected to MIDAS running on a separate platform by means of a Common Object Request Broker Architecture (CORBA) compliant interface. The Muse system acts as a client to a new product derived from MIDAS called the "Millennia Engine". The Millennia Engine is essentially MIDAS without its user interface. The Muse system now provides the user interface by allowing the designer to explore the design in immersive design. At voice command, the user can request that a certain analysis tool or methogram be connected to a component of the design. The tool or methogram is then executed and the results presented to the designer using advanced visualization techniques. This presentation may be through colors applied to the surface of the

component, by posting graphs of various kinds in the virtual world, by producing various sounds. These data presentation methods have been shown to increase the efficiency of a designer by up to 100 times over standard flat screen displays.

The technology employed in the IPDE is that of persistent objects which can be passed between system elements (i.e. computers) using the Common Object Request Broker Architecture (CORBA).

6.1 Object Design

The following objects are a minimal set of object definitions for the system

(1) Hardware components including attributes

- Name
- Permanent ID
- Dimensions
- Material
- Tolerances
- 3D CAD type graphical representation
- 2D Icon type graphical representation
- Function
- Estimated Cost
- Availability

(2) Analysis or simulation tools including attributes

- Name
- Version
- Language
- Host(s) where available
- Inputs
- outputs

(3) Projects including

- Name
- Defined Roles
- Documents such as Requirements
- Staff
- Budget

(4) Methodograms including

- Name
- Subcomponents
- Access

(5) Interpretation tools including

- Name
- Role

Preferred Terms
Design History

(6) Available computing resources including

Name

IP number

Communications Protocols

Figure 2 shows how these objects will be linked by various relationships (different from MIDAS type relations) by giving pointers to each object. Sonic example relations will include:

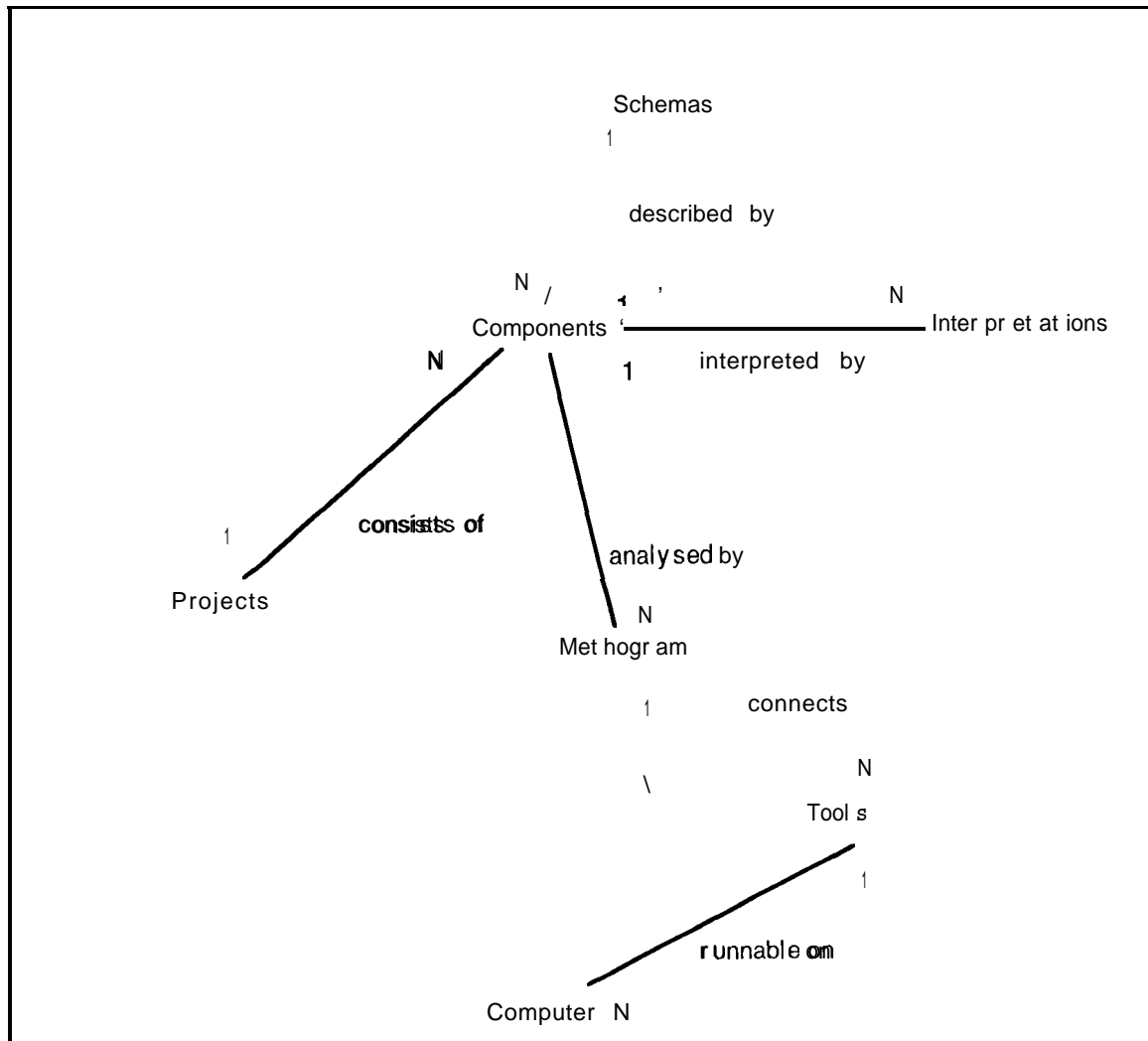


Fig. 2 Relationships Between Data Elements

In this drawing a line with N at one end and 1 at the other means that there may be N objects of that type which are related to 1 at the other end of the arc. So, for example, the lowest line shows

that there may be N computers on which a particular tool can be run. The line above that says that a methogram may require N tools to be run.

Within the hardware components which make up the spacecraft design there are relations which are also managed by the database.

An example of such relations is as follows in Fig. 3:

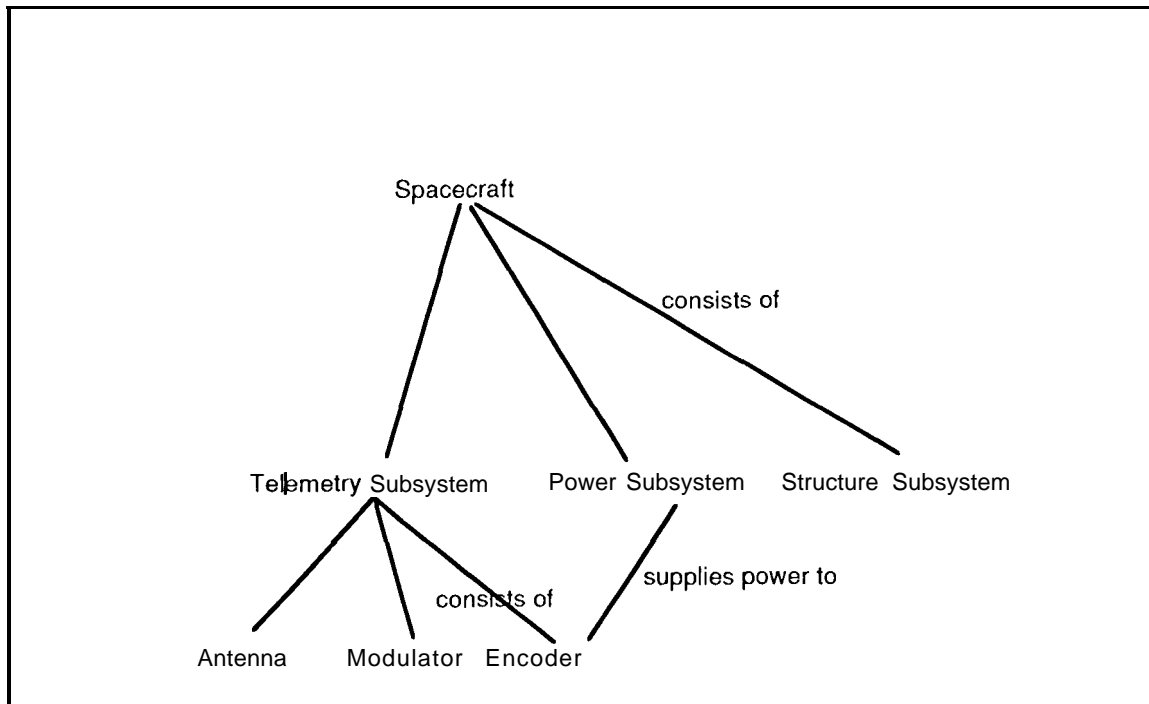


Fig. 3 Relationships Between Hardware Components

6.2 Access To The Database

The database provides a CORBA compatible interface for all these objects. In the MIDAS Project JPL has already defined CORBA interface objects for some of these including Projects, Schemas, Methodograms, Tools, Computers

These objects are presently part of the millennium engine internal database.

They are presently being transferred to the design database.

6.3 Overall Architecture

Based on the above discussion, the overall software architecture for the MuSE based Integrated Product Design tool looks like:

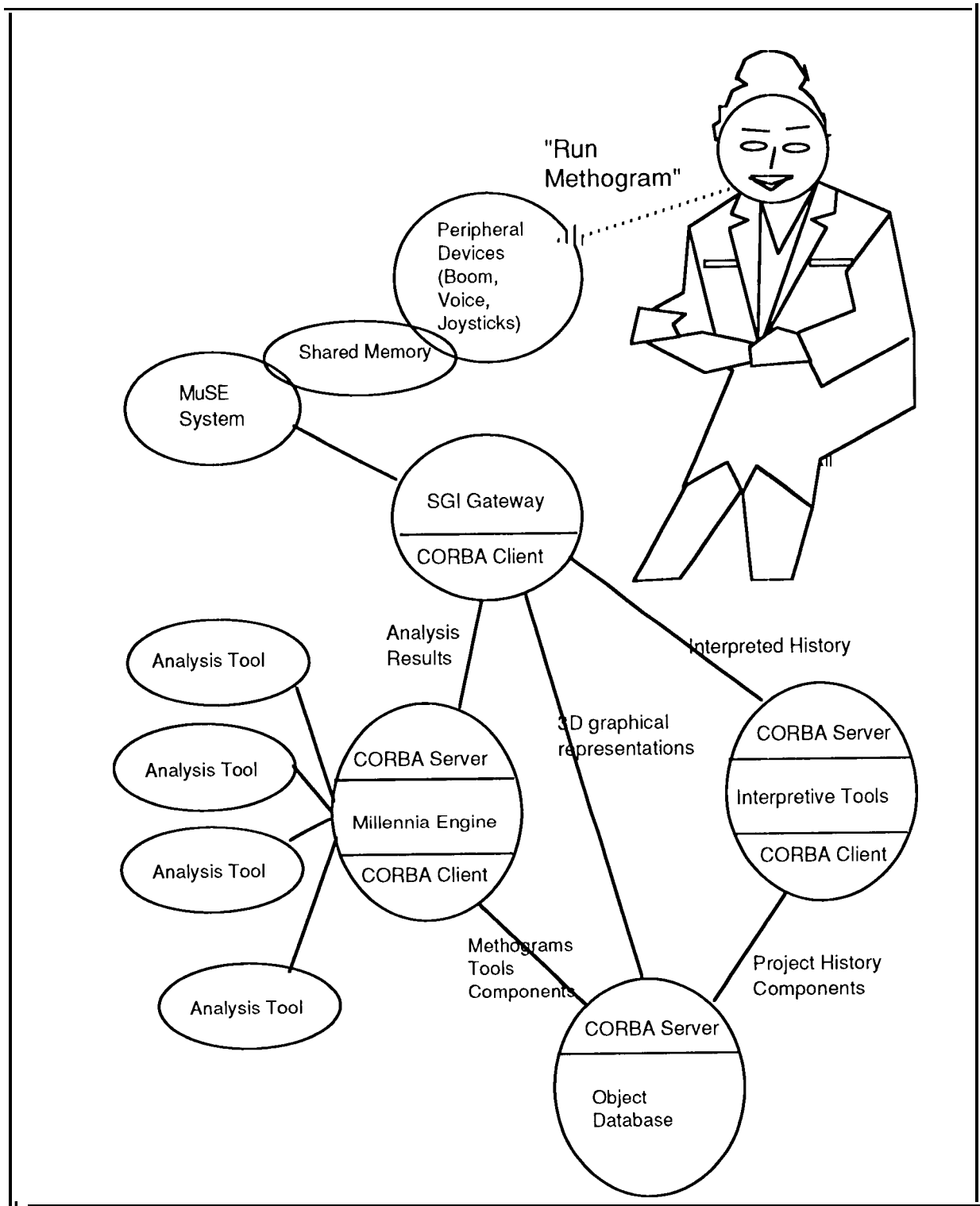


Fig.4 Interpretive Design Product Environment

The MuSE system is connected in with the SGI Gateway software presently under design. This software will be a CORBA client with the code necessary

to communicate with Muse using their shared memory interface.

The Millennia Engine will maintain its ability to run methograms but will no longer store them. This function will be transferred to the Illustra database. The Engine will request the information about the methograms from the database as needed by adding a client component.

While the above architecture represents the MuSE system configuration, there will be lots of other specialized architectures such as simple traditional MIDAS configurations.

To assist the human designer working from within the IPDE, we plan

to offer a “virtual human” assistant. Designers are often senior employees who are put off by high tech equipment. We hope that the virtual human will be lifelike enough that he will ease some of their concerns. We are using the “Jack” product from the University of Pennsylvania for our virtual human. Jack will offer advice about how to use the equipment when requested by the user. He will also be able to undertake tasks such as search for a particular methogram or standard component which might be useful to the designer.

7.0 SCENE GENERATION (AUTHORING)



Fig. 5 An Example Of A Scene In An Immersive Environment

A design scenario for the year 2000 might consist of a spacecraft designer sitting at a control boom and looking at the scene shown in Fig. 6 which consists of a SIM spacecraft in orbit around the Earth. With a voice command, the designer can stop time and point the spacecraft to the star that it is observing. The designer can then request that a calculation of the light path through the optical system be

performed using the JPL I-MOS software. The results would return in the form of twin light paths becoming visible on the spacecraft image. The designer could then say "Remove panel A" and this would be done showing the light path interior to the spacecraft. They could then make some modification to a mirror position and redo the calculation all with voice command. Then it would be possible

to ask Jack why the mirror position was so close to the telemetry and Jack will search the data base and reply verbally by repeating the conversions that were exchanged on the subject in 1998.

All of the visual elements in this scenario need to be created ("authored") using an immersive design authoring tool. We are presently working with a Canadian company called Virtual Prototypes Inc. to evaluate their tool kit to perform this function. We believe that their object-oriented data driven approach will give us what we need. We believe also that their animation methodology using direct tie in of data from simulations into scene parameters may work for us though integrating this into the MuSE environment will present a challenge.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

The immersive design center is coming soon, All the pieces are now available and graphics technology is fast enough to support them. Voice recognition is also developed to the point where annoying delays are minimized though parsing and data retrieval are still marginal on the time required to perform these functions. Strategies to divert the user during these delays are being actively investigated and some preliminary results point the way to overcoming this technological weakness,

Within ten years we feel that fully integrated voice activated design systems will be widespread and lead to faster and more fully optimized designs becoming ubiquitous.

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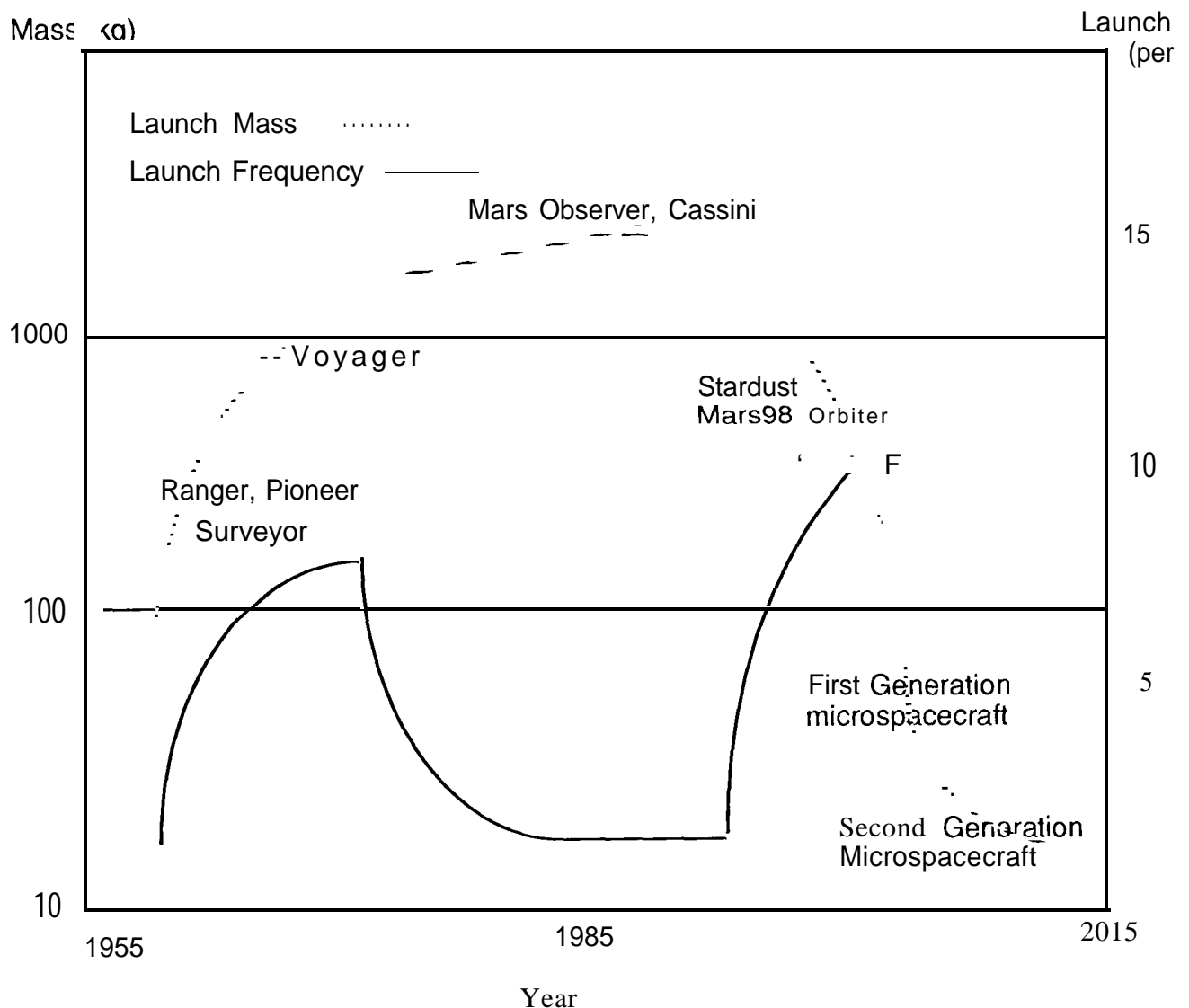


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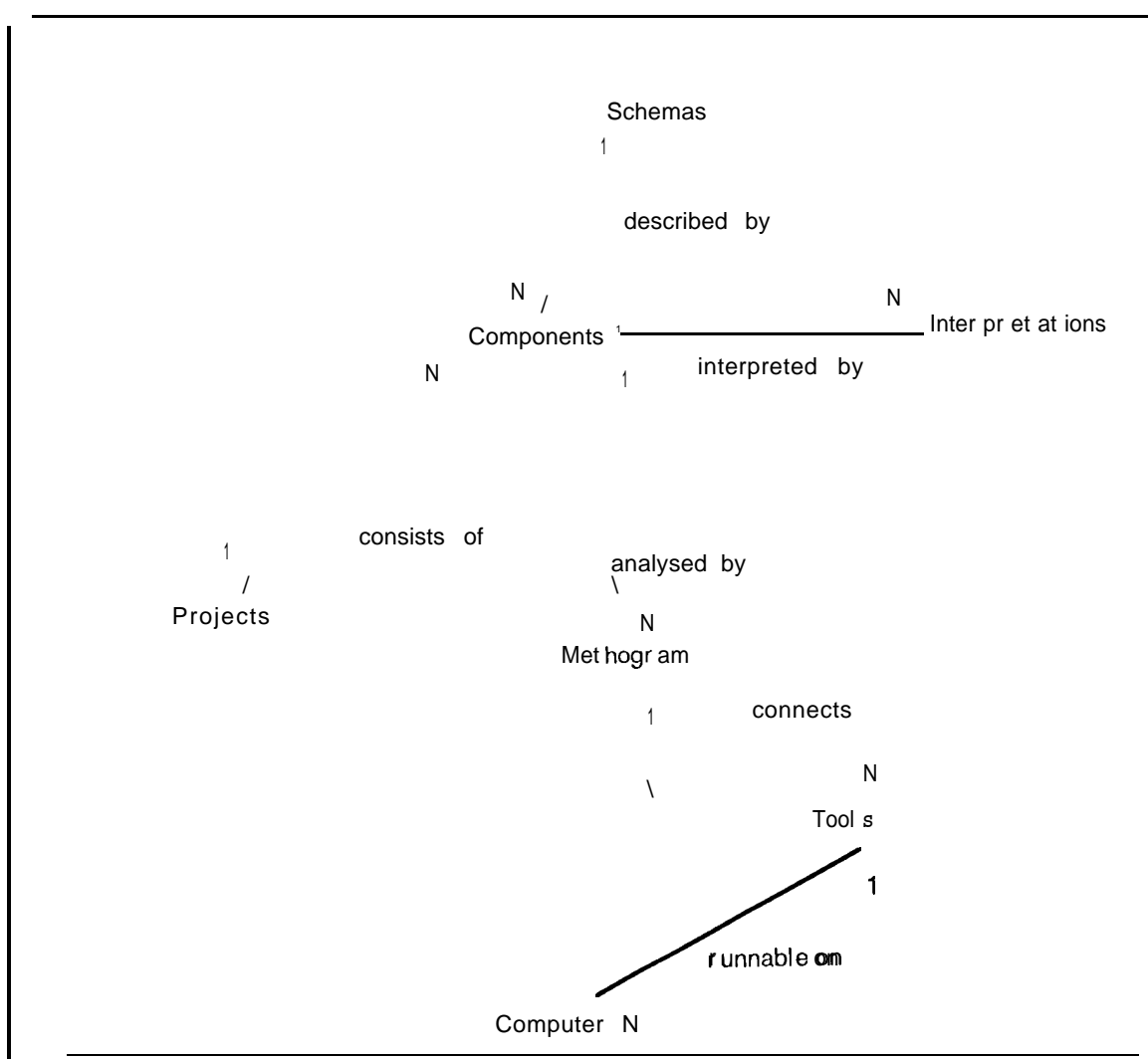


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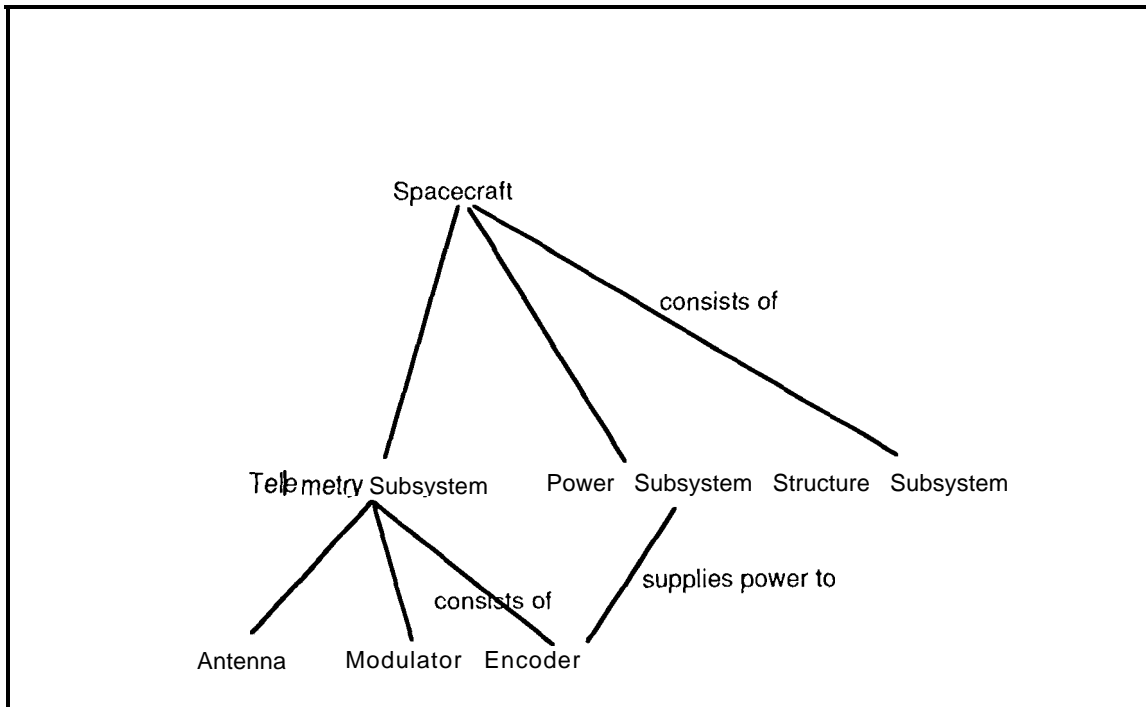


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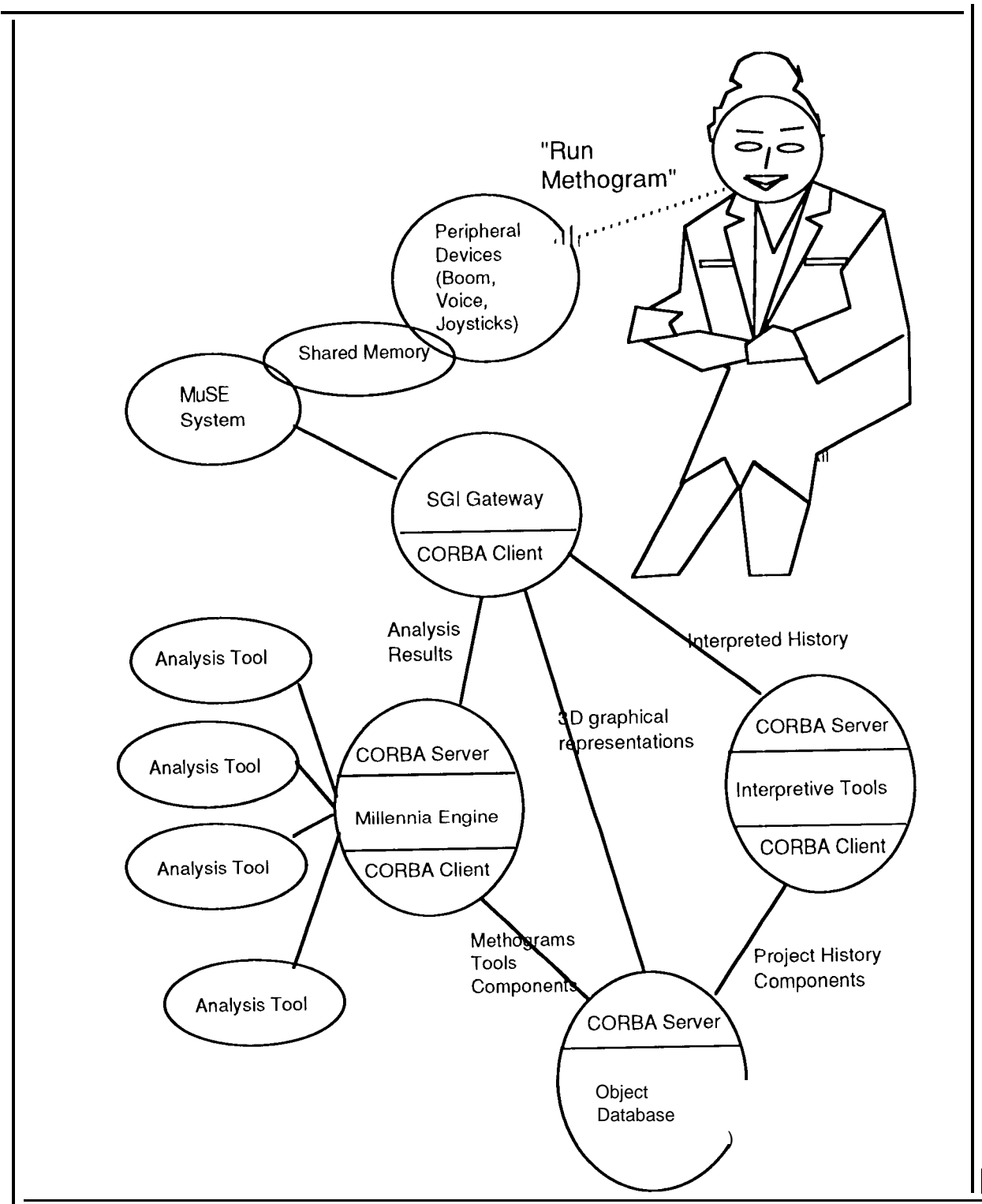


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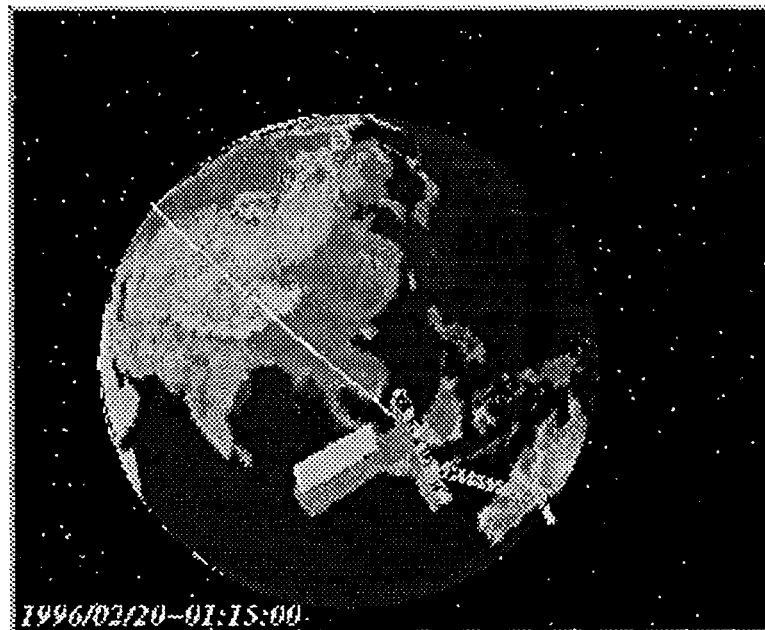


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